



# The Middle East Partnership Initiative

## *Arab Business Women Are Leaders in Reform of the Middle East and North Africa*

Businesswomen in the Middle East and North Africa are key players in the regional reform process. The Women's Business Summit held May, 2005 in Tunis provided the opportunity to gather businesswomen in the region who are well positioned to become the leaders for change in their

societies. As business owners and executives, they recognize their leading role in reform through business expansion, international trade and reformed economic systems. Keynote, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, said *"A priority of U.S. policy is to foster the participation of women in all forms of public life – be it the political world or the work force."*

The Summit has helped business women leaders to explore broader issues affecting the region where their leadership can be constructive. One participant, a business owner who had also taken part in another MEPI program, said, *"Thanks to the Business Summit in Tunis and the 'MEET US' program I was inspired to share with the American University of Beirut alumni community how we might fight against discrepancy and the lack of economic, social, and political rights of women in the region."*

**Public/Private Partnership:** MEPI joined with Women Entrepreneurs (WE, Inc.), a U.S. non-profit business association, in a public-private partnership to help North African and Arab women advocate for policy solutions that encourage business ownership. Volunteers from WE, Inc. also provided information and resources, as well as shared information on their personal experiences setting up businesses in the U.S. Photos at [www.mepi.state.gov](http://www.mepi.state.gov).

**Delegations to the Middle East and North Africa  
Business Women's Summit in Tunis, Tunisia (May 24-26, 2005)**  
Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, U.A.E., West Bank/Gaza, Yemen, U.S.A.

**Training:** The Beyster Institute at the Rady School, University of California, San Diego organized the training for the participants during the Summit. The Institute offered classes and workshops on entrepreneur training, policy analysis, communication skills, motivating employees and recruiting and retaining talent. The Summit provided the participants the setting to:

- *Explore New markets*
- *Improve Skills*
- *Generate Practical Ideas*
- *Build Peer Networks*
- *Learn From Leaders*
- *Find Venture Partners*

**Network:** Participants were able to interact with other participants from different countries. The Summit's informal activities and workshops fostered significant cross-border networking among the participants. It also laid the groundwork for enhancing the business climate for women throughout the region and increasing regional trade.

All participants gained insights from the careers and experiences of the U.S. delegation in promoting women's economic and social rights. The delegation included Under Secretary of Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, Patricia Harrison, and Vice Chair, Export-Import Bank, April Foley.

**MEPI** is a Presidential initiative that supports economic, political, and educational reform efforts in the Middle East and expanded opportunity for all people of the region, especially women.

**U.S. Department of State**

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